A Warning for Bad Wives:

OR

The Manner of the Burning

OF

Sarah Elston.

Who was Burnt to death a Stake on *Kennington* Common neer *Southwark*, on *Wednesday* the 24th of *April* 1678.

For Murdering her Husband *Thomas Elston*, the 25th of *September* last.

And likewise the Execution and Confession of *John Masters*, and *Gabriel Dean* his Men; who were Executed for Robbing on the Highway.

TOGETHER

With their Behaviour, last Words, and Confession at the place of Execution.

With Allowance. *Ro. L'Estrange.*

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A Warning for Bad Wives.

THis unhappy woman was Convicted at the Laſt Aſſizes holden for the County of *Surrey*, of Petty Treaſon for murdering her Husband, and received ſentence to be Burnt to Death for the ſame. They lately dwelt in a place call'd *Fiſhmongers Alley*, in the Borough of *Southwark*, by Trade a Hatter, and had been married ſeveral years; but lived with much Diſcord and frequent Wrangling: of which ſome now would partly excuſe the woman, and alleadge the man as the principal Cauſe of their Differences by his ill husbandry, croſs carriage, ill company, and other provocations, not here to be mentioned. Others gave Evidence that ſhe had threatned his Life ſeveral times before. However, moſt certain it was, and ſhe never denied it, that he died by her hand: for a quarrel ariſing between them, and he having beat her very

very severely, she with a pair of Sizzars gave him a wound on the left part of his breast; whereof, without speaking one word, he died. Yet all along to the last she denied that she had any murderous intention or designe to kill him, onely thought to do him some slight Mischief in revenge of his Cruelty in beating her.

From the time of her receiving Sentence, which was *Tuesday* the 26th of *March*, till this present *Wednesday* the 24 of *April*, whereon she suffered, having begg'd a fortnights time of the Court, the better to prepare herself for that terrible Death, she appeared extraordinary penitent, much delighted with the company of Ministers, and other good sober understanding Christians, that came to confer with her about her Everlasting state. And though through neglect of hearing Gods word preached, and using other the means appointed, she was extreamly ignorant of the nature and very foundations of the Gospel, yet now her eyes began some what to be opened; and when those Mysteries were laid forth before her, she heard them gladly.

So that I know not whether we should more admire the wisdom or the mercy of God in his proceedings with this poor Creature: had she not been guilty of Blood, 'tis probable she had never known the worth of the precious blood of Christ; had she not here been sentenc'd to momentary Flames, 'tis to be feared she had not so easily escaped Everlasting Burnings. The rashness of a wicked Fury drew her into Affliction, that Affliction humbled her, and God took the advantage of her Humiliation for her Conversion. Had not one foot slipt into the mouth of Hell, she had never been in this fair readiness for Heaven. There is none we see, even of the weakest Sex, so weak or foolish, but hath strength or wit enough to sin, or to make ill use of her sin, to destroy another to whom she owed both love and obedience. 'Tis onely the goodness and wisdom of an infinite God, that can make our sin good to us, though evil in it self, and can save even by Destruction: 'tis no thank to our selves or our sins, that we are better'd with evil. The work, O Lord, is thine, let thine be the Glory.

She was often heard to bewail with tears the ill Course of her former Life, especially her rage, unquietness and evil communication, whereby she had often provoked her Husband to be more violent and cruel towards her, than probably he might otherwise have been: For as *A soft answer turneth away wrath*, and gentle Carriage in time prevails even with the worst Natures; so passion and railing, calling of names and bitter language, especially between man and wife, are the very Bellows of the Devil, whereby he blows up such irreconcilable hatred, Feuds and Animosities, as seldom terminate in less than the destruction of one or both the parties, at least destroy all the Comforts of their loves, and turn that Society instituted for humane solace and delight, into a perpetual purgatory, or meer hell upon earth.

She spent most of the time indulged by the favour of the Court for the preparation of her Soul, in Prayer, Reading, or Conversation with Ministers, and seemed very willing to die: saying, That since she had been so unfortunate as to kill her Husband, she had never

ver been very desirous to live, but now especially she saw so much of the Worlds vanity and Heavens excellency, that she even long'd for Death.

The day appointed for Execution was this present *Wednesday* the 24th of *April*, and the place on *Kennington* Common neer *Southwark*; where a Stake being set up, she was conveyed thither on a Hurdle, being clothed all in White, with a vast multitude of People attending her, and after very solemn Prayers offered up on that sad occasion, and some few words tending to clear her Innocency as to any intent of murdering her Husband, and the horror, confusion, and surprize she was in when she saw him fall; how well she had loved him, and that even then, notwithstanding all his Abuses, she could have given her own life to have saved his: Desiring all Women to take warning by her, and to live in love and Peace with their Husbands if it be possible; at least to avoid their Fury by going out of the way for the present, when they are in rage, rather than to stand bandying of words, or teazing them with reproachful Language; which she acknowledged had oft been her own fault: That they should remember that their Husband is their Head, and that the Apostle requires them to be obedient to them in every thing; and this not onely to the kinde and indulgent, but even the peevish and froward ought to have the same observance. She confest she had done very ill

ill in lifting up her hand against her Husband, and offering to revenge her self of him; but protested again most seriously, that she never in her life had the least designe or thoughts of killing of him, onely it was an unfortunate Accident, and whether it came by a blow from her, or his violent running upon the point of the Sizzars as she held them out to defend her self, she could not to this minute certainly tell; but she hoped God had pardoned all her Miscarriages in that matter, and heartily desired all good People to joyn in Prayer for her: That the same Mercifull God would forgive her all her other sins, and give her strength of Faith to go through this Fiery Tryal, and receive her Soul into his Kingdom. After which the Fire was kindled, and giving two or three lamentable Shrieks, she was deprived both of Voice and Life, and so burnt to Ashes according to the Sentence.

The same day there were executed at the same place two Men for a Robbery committed on the High-way: the first was *John Masters*, a person well educated, but falling into poverty, having been in prison for debt, and under other crosses, was induced to these ill courses. The other *Gabriel Dean* by trade formerly a Pipe-maker, who sometimes pretended to be the others man; These two in *May* last, robbed a Gentleman near *Putney* of twenty pounds, but being pursued were taken, and upon evident proof condemned last assizes; *viz.* the 25th of *March* last, during all which time, their lives have been respited that they might the better prepare themselves for their end. Mr. *Masters* did protest solemnly, that he had never before been concern'd in any Robbery, and expresst himself much af-

afflicted for his evil therein, now, but more especially for the scandal that might thence (though undeservedly) arise to others amongst some censorious people that delight in nothing but columny; The other acknowledged he had been a very extravagant Ill Liver, and concerned in petty thieveries heretofore; They were both extreamly penitent and devout, as far as Charity could judg by their Actions, desiring all people to pray for them, and not to insult over their Memory for this their Ignominious end, but rather that *he that standeth should take heed lest he fall*; For once they at little as any present, thought of being guilty of any Crime that should bring them to this condition, but confess the punishment was righteous both from God, and Man in this World, and trusted that God had pardon'd them as to the world to come; and so after several publique and private prayers uttered with much fervour zeal and earnestness of spirit. They took their leaves of the world, and were hanged according to sentence.

FINIS.